

POLICY TIPS



POLICY ANALYSIS FROM THE HEARTLAND INSTITUTE

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Common Core Standards

Problem

Most states have traded their education standards for Common Core national standards. State leaders were told Common Core would not infringe on state and local control, would establish high academic quality, and would improve student performance. Unfortunately, none of this became true when the standards were actually written.

Common Core was written behind closed doors, largely by four education consultants employed by private organizations. Because of this, most state lawmakers and citizens did not hear about Common Core until after state boards and departments of education had quickly adopted it and corresponding national tests, with the Obama administration having presented adoption as the surest route to eligibility for federal Race to the Top money.

As they have learned how Common Core will affect curricula, teaching, and testing, state lawmakers and citizens have objected strenuously, leading more than a dozen states to consider withdrawing, while others have dropped their involvement with federally funded tests. The main concerns include Common Core's questionable academic quality, nontransparent creation and quick adoption, federal involvement, links to a vast expansion of student data-mining, and further erosion of state and local control.

Policy Solution

States should replace Common Core with higher-quality, state-controlled academic standards and tests not funded by the federal government. They should secure student data privacy and ensure national testing mandates do not affect instruction in private and home schools.

References

"The Common Core: A Poor Choice For States," The Heartland Institute:
<http://heartland.org/policy-documents/common-core-poor-choice-states>.

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Policy Message

Point 1: Common Core is of mediocre academic quality, according to nationally known experts, and research shows education standards do not improve student achievement.

Point 2: Common Core was written behind closed doors by unelected committees inside organizations funded largely by the federal government.

Point 3: Most states have agreed to subject their laws to federally funded and monitored Common Core testing groups, largely through contracts legislatures have not reviewed.

Point 4: Many states promised the federal government they would trade their standards for Common Core before a draft or final version of the standards was published.

Point 5: The national Common Core testing groups have not specified what data they will require of states within their student assessments, but they have promised the federal government will receive full access. The Obama administration has removed federal protections that in the past limited student data-sharing and required schools to inform parents of it.

Point 6: Common Core threatens school choice, private schools, and home schools by creating a national market for education in which all tests—including the SAT, ACT, Iowa Basic, and Stanford 10—and most curricula are structured according to one system.

Point 7: Common Core is entirely experimental. No state or school has ever tested it.

Point 8: Education standards are not curriculum, but they determine what children will and will not learn. They define curriculum. And the federally funded testing consortia are creating a model Common Core curriculum, although federal curriculum creation is illegal.

Point 9: Almost no state has analyzed how much retraining teachers, new curriculum, and upgrading technology by 2016 for online-only Common Core tests will cost taxpayers.

Point 10: There is no process for parents, teachers, and school boards to provide feedback or gain flexibility on all or part of Common Core as students begin encountering it.